



**City of Bloomington
Environmental Commission**

The mission of the Environmental Commission is to advise the City of Bloomington on how its actions and policies may preserve and enhance the quality of Bloomington's environment, including the life-supporting processes that natural ecological systems provide to humans and other organisms.

AGENDA
8 December 2016
City Hall—McCloskey Room

1. Introductions

Present: Dedaimia Whitney, Linda Thompson, Dave Debikey, Andy Marrs, Chris Neggers, Mike Litwin, Wendy Wertz, David Parkhurst, Chaim Julian, Ramsay Harik, Nick Kappas, Riley Zipper, Sarah Green

Absent: Chad Roeder

Guests: 8 guests

2. Approval of minutes

Approved by voice vote; one abstention.

3. Public comment

No comment

4. Mayor John Hamilton

What's the role of commissions and the EC in the administration?

- The Mayor intends to listen a fair amount to what we have to say.
- Commissions are important for deciding how to move forward on a certain issue as a collective.
 - A commission can be a public voice, intentionally separate from the administration - advocating from the outside.
 - At the other end of the spectrum, a commission can be a group that takes direction from the administration and helps in implementation of policy.
- Other boards/commissions in the City have statutory obligations, but the EC is a little different.
- Accountability is key though.
 - For the EC, we should ask if we're proud of what we're doing.

Who's listening to us?

- Could we have more direction - to at least get us started? What should we do with the fruits of our labor?
- Mayor Hamilton: What is the EC most proud of?
 - BEAP
 - PCBs
 - Fielding public concerns
 - Environmental input on planned developments
 - Going to plan commission meetings, bringing awareness to environmental issues, Nick's appointment to PC
 - Waste/recycling report
 - Difficult to find information for, but it was rewarding
 - Distributing literature about the harms of polystyrene containers to restaurants and schools
 - Community education
- A common thread to them?
 - We pushed it ourselves - took it on as a commission because it was the right thing to do.
 - We would like to affect public policy.
- How would we rate Bloomington on environmental performance?
 - Can always improve
 - Weaknesses:
 - Green infrastructure - only have one green roof, not good enough incentives
 - Should have an energy disclosure ordinance to reward the most efficient energy users
- Important to set goals and measure where we are, but easy to get overwhelmed

What would the mayor like to see the EC working on?

- EC is good at research and advocacy.
- The City has a deep commitment to environmental protection and energy conservation, but hasn't taken enough steps to do something - the mayor will be pushing an energy disclosure ordinance and could use our help.
- Important to prioritize the issues we care about.
- The administration is working hard to get solar on City Hall and at the police station.
- It's surprising that Bloomington doesn't have a bike share program.
- Various other things are in the works that the EC could have input on, like reforms of sanitation system, a new MRF, CBU improving wastewater treatment including anaerobic treatment.

Seeking permission

- In the past, the EC has freely written letters and advocated for issues, but recently have felt like they needed permission to do so.
- We can't even send an educational letter without the director of P&T and mayor's office having to approve it - because of a rule the last administration had.
- Mayor Hamilton's view is that there shouldn't be a rule like this, since we should be an independent voice for advocacy.
- Other commissions feel this way too (BCOS, Commission on Aging)

Affordable housing

- Affordable housing is an environmental issue - where you live has a big impact on the environment.
- Big public debate we're having in the City now.
- How to balance growth with retaining the City's character and charm is important.
 - It's good that we're an attractive city to live in, but we must make decisions regarding where they're going to live.
 - The EC can weigh in on issues like this and more, like...
 - The new hospital
 - Autonomous vehicles
 - E-cigarettes, etc.

Renewable energy

- President-elect Trump appointing Scott Pruitt to EPA, IN is coal country - difficult political environment we live in.
- Can we begin to attract some alternative energy start-ups to Bloomington?
- How to reduce the costs for regular people?
- Bloomington could help pilot a renewable energy project.
- Mayor sees a lot of potential here - Vectren, for example, will only have one coal-producing plant by 2024.
- Advanced energy economy is coming to IN.
- The City uses a lot of energy at its WWTPs, but doesn't produce any solar - there's a lot we can do to look at our own energy consumption.

How can the City influence IU?

- The City doesn't have much authority over IU.
- Most powerful voice is the students.
- Helping organize and arm students could be a role we play.
- IU still uses coal whenever it's cheaper than gas - we could affect some change here

Our relationship with the administration

- We might bump up against the City, might want to push them in a different direction. How are we going to know that you've heard us and taken what we've said seriously? How can we be sure we'll be kept in the loop about things like the sanitation modernization plan?
- No guarantees of anything - but we should be useful and innovative.
- The commission has a natural relationship with the administration because the EC was established by ordinance.
- We shouldn't think about what we should've been asked to do retroactively but where we can affect change proactively.
- What do we as the EC think our role should be?
 - Striking a balance between instruction from the City and projects we want to go for on our own.
 - We don't need the Mayor's permission to say what we want to say - we just need to build credibility and be an effective voice.
- One of the challenges in Bloomington is how to agree on development standards in a way that isn't painful and expensive for everybody involved.
 - We should have an evolving set of standards where we learn as we go.

Water infrastructure

- HT had an article yesterday about IN as a whole needing about \$3 billion in repairs
- Obviously this includes Bloomington - what have we done about this?

- CBU is looking at the Monroe watershed - a great asset
 - Most of it is in Jackson and Brown Counties and we haven't made a big effort collaborating with them about protecting the watershed.
- Water has improved in Bloomington since where we were last year with DBPs.
- Mayor Hamilton is a big advocate for conservation pricing but the regulatory structure of the state isn't amenable to this at the moment.
- We should think about how and where to move people with the BEAP

5. Commissioner announcements

Nick (Officer nominations)

- Officer election will occur in January.
- Nick will prepare the slate before the meeting.

Dedaimia (Budget)

- Should save money for the event with Eco-Heroes.
- Have a balance of approximately \$400 for this year which we could use for the BEAP
- Christy (Planning Director) didn't give permission for it to go to printing at the previous price because she sees it as a launching-pad for the future
- Vote to approve printing the BEAP, which will cost \$214 for 100 copies: 8 yeas, one abstention

Mike

- Water quality working group needs (at least) one more member.

Dedaimia

- For the January bucket list meeting, think about what environmental initiative we'd like to see in Bloomington before we die.
- Working group chairs need to write a year-end report.

Dave

- Waste/recycling meeting should be happening next week (Dave won't be able to make it) or in January.

6. Adjourn